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Spook Agency Recruits Grads in Prosaic Way

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To the unsuspecting eye, Jack Hanson looks like any campus recruiter as he interviews prospective graduates at Idaho State University.

But, Hanson is in greater demand than most recruiters, despite the fact that he really won't say what kind of job he is offering. And the student who signs with Hanson just can't tell where he might end up working because Hanson's firm isn't like other employers. Hanson recruits for the CIA.

"We're looking for people of good character and who pay their bills and don't have too extensive a felony and police record," Hanson said in a special meeting for about 20 students who weren't able to get a one-to-one interview.

News reports of misconduct and criminal activity endorsed by the CIA apparently hasn't dimmed students' interest in a career with the Central Intelligence Agency. At ISU, like the other major universities in the 10 western states in which he recruits, Hanson rarely has time to interview all the students interested. He said about 75 of every 1,000 interviewed will actually go to work for the agency, he said. But he declined to say whether any ISU students have ever been hired.

"Can't say. We usually don't say who gets hired," he said. "I'm here just like any recruiter, looking for people to work for the CIA. I've interviewed about 15 people and I'm interested in a few of them."

James Lupher, placement director at ISU, said ISU has no record of students being hired by the CIA, but said that doesn't mean none have.

"We have no real way of knowing whether they're hired or not because we usually lose contact with them," he said.

James Bond notwithstanding, working for the CIA is not glamorous, Hanson said. Most of the work of gathering intelligence is done through technology.

Of prime interest to CIA recruiters are electronics technicians, engineers and foreign language experts. But according to a brochure published by the CIA personnel department in Washington, the agency is also interested in hiring students with backgrounds in history, journalism, economics, geography and accounting. CIA personnel rarely carry weapons, he said, and won't necessarily get an overseas assignment.

Starting salaries vary, Hanson said, with the education of the recruit. A technician with a two-year degree can expect to earn about \$13,000 his first year maintaining communications equipment. A recruit with a doctorate in psychology or linguistics would probably start at about \$18,000 a year. Lupher said those pay scales are above what most graduates could earn in industry.